

## **Moving from a National Model toward a Provincial Model of Empowerment for Managers and Executives in Public Sector: A Case Study**

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### **Abstract**

The first aim of this study is to assess the effectiveness of activities, strategies and processes associated with managers' empowerment based on the National Human Resource Empowerment Model in Iran. The second aim is to propose a provincial model of human resources empowerment for managers and executives. To collect data, a qualitative research approach including semi-structured interviews and content analysis was used. The research sample consists of 27 managers who were recruited by purposive sampling method from an Iranian organization in public sector. The results of interviews revealed that there is a practical gap between current effectiveness of human resources empowerment in the studied organization and the optimal effectiveness suggested by the national model. In addition, content analysis showed that lack of a systematic and trackable plan of human resources empowerment had stopped the implementation of empowerment strategies. This provincial empowerment model can be used to keep managers motivated and efficient where regional, social and cultural values are considered important in the workplace. Moreover, it could be used to remove the gap between current effectiveness in studied organization and the optimal effectiveness indicated in national model through more motivated and empowered managers.

### **Keywords**

Provincial model, Empowerment, Managers, Case study.

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**Introduction**

Over the past two decades, organizations are witnessing fast and unpredictable changes in their structure (Meyerson & Dewettinck, 2012; Davis & Coan, 2015; Gilpin-Jackson, 2017). Increased global competition, rapid development of information technology, cognitive features of human resources and customers are reasons for these changes (Beer, 1991; Ongori, 2009; Baird & Wang, 2010; Alvesson & Sveningsson, 2015; Vantrappen & Wirtz, 2018). In such dynamic setting, majority of organizations are struggling not only to grow their economic and technological power but also to improve their social values which are considered as new challenges for organizations. (Delgoshaei, Tabibi & Pahlavan, 2007; Maitland & Thomson, 2014; Bruna, Chanlat & Chauvet, 2017). These needs and challenges reveal the importance of empowerment programs in order to empower the managers as a key source and competitive tool in organizations (Davari & Rezaee, 2003; Akbari, Hosseini & Ziyae, 2016; Kundu, Kumar & Gahlawat, 2019). A part of this importance is related to its undeniable role in creating characteristics such as confidence, creativity, innovation, and positive thinking to overcome occupational problems (Hendry & Pettigrew, 1990; Papaioannou, Kriemadis, Alexopoulos, Vrontou & Kartakoullis, 2011). The other part is related to the finding that empowered managers within organizations are enabled to be more flexible and responsive which promote both individual and organizational performance (Chua & Iyengar, 2006; Jose & Mampilly, 2014; Kundu, Kumar & Gahlawat, 2019).

Consistent with the global growing attention to the empowerment programs of managers, Iranian public organizations have started to design and use more updated versions of human resources empowerment programs for their managers (Iranian Empowerment Foundation of human Resources, 2008). This urges Iranian researchers to develop and use more specified models of human resources empowerment in which regional, social and cultural values of a particular setting are considered as important elements in motivating individuals to participate in empowerment programs as well as to act according to their learning from these programs. The outcome of using such models would be training managers that are able to make fast decisions and quick responses to any unpredictable situation (Ongori,

2009; Leonard, Lewis, Freedman & Passmore, 2013; Chow, 2018). Accordingly, the first aim of this study is to compare the current human resources empowerment model in our studied organization with the Iranian model of human resources empowerment to detect the theoretical and practical gaps between these two. The second aim is to propose a provincial model of empowerment for managers based on the findings of this study.

We believe that this study contributes to literature in three different areas: first, we only focus on managers and executives as the target of human resources empowerment program. A glance at the scientific literature shows that little is known on the target group. Second, we propose a provincial model of empowerment for managers in which regional culture, regional condition, and particular organizational climate are respected. Finally, we use a combination of semi-structured interviews and content analysis to collect data and find the gaps.

### **Research Background**

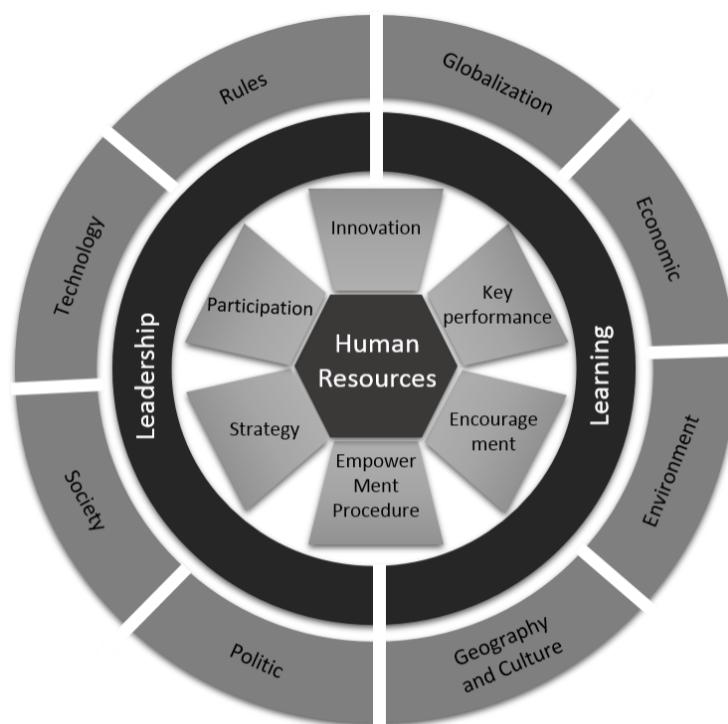
Empowerment as an organizational construct has been considered by various scientific disciplines (Pines, Rauschhuber, Cook, Norgan, Canchola, Richardson, & Jones, 2014; Isaksson, Hajdarevic, Abramsson, Stenvall & Hornsten, 2014). Perhaps that is the reason why recent reviews have not been able to present a clear definition of this concept (Zimmerman, 1990). Empowerment, in its most general sense, refers to the ability of individuals to gain understanding and control over personal, social, economic and political forces in order to take action which helps them to improve their performance (Israel, Checkoway, Schultz & Zimmerman, 1994; Ambad & Bahron, 2012; AL-Rousan, 2014). Also, it is characterized as the process by which individuals and communities are enabled to have greater control, efficacy, and social justice over daily challenges (Solomon, 1976; Fawcett, White, Balcazar, Suarez-Balcazar, Mathews, Paine, Seekins & Smith, 1994; Israel et al., 1994; Nauman, Khan & Ehsan, 2010, Daronkolaee, Esmaeili & Nikaeen 2014; Pigeon, Montani & Boudrias, 2017). The different definitions represent that in the center of empowerment process are functions that form individual and collective properties and improve the efficiency and fairness of organizational contexts which govern the use of these properties

(Smith, 2008). As such, it might be easier to define empowerment by its absence but still difficult to be defined in action because it varies from an individual and culture to another (Rappaport, 1984).

Reviewing the prior studies shows that there have been different models including mechanical, organic, social, and Iranian human resources empowerment to reveal the nature and mechanism of empowerment among organizational staffs. Accordingly, staff empowerment from different mechanical and organic models yields various definitions. From a mechanical standpoint, empowerment refers to authority delivery to the employees which is a process in which a manager provides a bright insight and draws a plan for reaching it within the organization (Foy, 1997; Blanchard, Carlos & Randolph, 2001). Based on the organic model, empowerment is not what managers do but it is the staff perception of their roles in organization. Managers can provide necessary context for staff empowerment through paying attention to the motivational needs of their staff (Conger & Kanungo, 1988). As a motivational concept, empowerment consists of five aspects of self-effectiveness, self-determination, meaning, impact, and trust in others (Spreitzer, 1995; Thomas & Velthouse, 1990; Ugeoro, 2006).

Empowerment concept can also be discussed as a social model. In this regard, Page and Czuba (1999) state that empowerment has three main elements including: (1) it is a multi-dimensional concept, (2) it has a social aspect, and (3) it is a process. It is multi-dimensional which means it occurs within sociological, psychological, economic, and other dimensions. Empowerment also occurs at various levels, such as individual, group, and community. Empowerment is a social process since it occurs in relation to others, and it is a process along a continuum. Other aspects of empowerment may vary on the basis of the specific context and people involved, but these three elements remain constant. The extent to which the empowerment is understood also varies based on perspectives and contexts. It should be mentioned that the empowerment has positive influences on employees' attitudes and behaviors. In the attitudinal domain, it increases job satisfaction, reduces job stress and job uncertainty and in the behavioral domain it increases self-confidence, adaptability and development of the ability to deal with the customers (Rafiq & Ahmed, 1998).

The latest model is the Iranian model of human resources empowerment which was developed by Iranian Empowerment Foundation of human Resources (2008), based on the European Foundation for Quality Management (EFQM)<sup>1</sup>. As it can be seen in Figure 1, this model is composed of two main elements of leadership (including the sub-elements of strategy, empowerment procedure, and encouragement) and learning (including the sub-elements of participation, innovation, and key performance). We use this model as a reference to explain our research findings since it is matched with Iranian organizations' context and it also provides more theoretical and practical explanations for our research purposes.



**Fig. 1. The National Iranian model of Human Resource Empowerment (Iranian Empowerment Foundation of human Resources, 2008)**

1. <https://www.efqm.org/>

Table 1 summarizes all the mentioned empowerment models on the empowerment of employees from a historical standpoint to the present time:

**Table 1. A summary of the most important old and new models of empowerment**

Models	Definition	Goal	Strategy	Theorist
Mechanical Model	Empowerment is delegating	Strengthening	Distribution of power and authority	Foy (1997) Blanchard et al. (2001)
Cognitive View	Empowerment is motivating	Enabling	Self-sufficiency	Conger & Kanungo, (1988)
Organic Model	Motivational View Empowerment is releasing intrinsic forces	Increasing intrinsic energy	Self-efficacy, autonomy, efficiency, job significance trust	Thomas & Velthouse (1990), Spreitzer(1995)
Social Model	Empowerment is a process	Positive attitudes and behaviors	Relationship to others	Page & Czuba (1999)
Iranian Model of Human Resources Empowerment	Empowerment is recognizing potential abilities	Discovering the needed criteria for empowering	Working on learning and leadership	Iranian empowerment foundation of Human Resources (2008)

### **Human resource empowerment in Iran**

For several reasons human resources empowerment has been neglected in Iran: the inaccuracy of organizational goals, lack of a scientific definition of the job in some organizations, poor performance assessment, ambiguous indicators for measuring manpower productivity, and uncompetitive working climate (Hodavand & Sadeghian, 2007). In this regard, Monfared and Zamani (2005) showed that there is a significant difference between the important rate of human resource improvement criteria in Iranian organizations and our studied organization. Indeed, this difference occurs between what human resource programs are suggesting to these organizations and what these organizations are performing. In this regard, Delgoshaei et al., (2007) state that the organizations' leaders may play a meaningful role in closing the gap and contributing to the success rate of human resources programs in organizations. Moreover, most of the Iranian organizations only rely on the current general training programs to empower their employees. However, the study of Zareimatin, Mohammadi elyasi and Saenati (2007) showed

that the training courses can not necessarily enhance employees' empowerment in an organization. These issues require organizations to review their previous empowerment training programs and apply more updated training courses within their organization.

The studied organization in Iran is no exception to such challenges on its human resources empowerment program. During the five-year period of fifth development plan some important changes have been done in relation to mission, structure, management, politics, procedures and, in particular, human resources empowerment in the studied organization. Apart from the efforts, the empowerment activities and the adapted methods have received minor attention. Therefore, the first important question in the studied organization was what provincial model of empowerment would be best suited to this organization to enhance the human resource empowerment of managers and executives. To respond this question, we interviewed top organizational managers and investigated all documents related to human resources empowering using the methods which are described below.

## **Method**

### **Research design**

According to the main purpose of this study, we used a qualitative research approach. In this regard, we applied interview and content analysis techniques to gather our data since these two are the most common tools for the collection of qualitative data (Razavieh, 2015).

### **Participants**

Primary data source was all the top managers and executives of the studied organization. Secondary data source included all of the available documents related to human resources empowerment between the years of 2014 and 2015. To conduct the interviews, 27 top managers (59.25% men and 40.74% women) were selected through non-random (purposive) sampling method in which their departmental position and their work experience were taken into account. Table 2 shows more demographic information about the sample of this study.

**Table 2. Demographic information of the participants in the structured program**

Demographic Variables		Frequency
Education	Bachelor	12
	Master	9
	Ph.D	6
work Experience	1-10 years	8
	10-20 years	12
	20-30 years	7

### **Procedure**

We used semi-structured interviews and content analysis of the documents related to the empowerment activities in the studied organization to collect data. First, the structure and content of the interviews have been developed based on Iranian human resource empowerment model. Second, the content and questions of the interviews were checked and confirmed by two academic professors and two organizational experts. Third, we followed the ethical approval process and got permission from the studied organization to gather our data. Fourth, to organize the interviews, we used the organizational chart in which the position, department and the managerial area of each manager was indicated. As a next step, we contacted each senior manager using email and set an appointment time with him/her. It should be mentioned they received enough information regarding the purpose of interview and the time needed to conduct this interview via the same email. Each interview lasted about three hours. We continued the interviews to a saturation level in which there was no new point or comment in their opinion. After each interview, we recorded the answers using a paper and pencil as well as an electronic recorder. Moreover, we found all available documents within the studied organization to analyze the activities associated with the human resources empowerment.

### **Data analysis**

We applied a content analysis method to analyze our data. Content analysis is “a research technique for making replicable and valid inferences from texts (or other meaningful matter) to the contexts of their use” (Krippendorff, 2004, p. 18). Accordingly, the information



obtained from the interviews and documents has been analyzed using a content analysis method based on the items indicated in Table 3.

**Table 3. The items used in the semi structured interviews**

Leadership dimension	Learning dimension
Strategies of empowerment	Participation
Empowerment processes (information sharing, devolution, autonomy and independence in work, replacing autonomous teams with hierarchies)	Innovation
Encouragement	Key Functions

## **Results**

The findings of this study are presented in three sections. First, we evaluate the effectiveness of the practical empowerment activities within the organization through content analysis and semi-structured interview. Second, we investigate the strategies and processes of human resources empowerment within the organization using those same methods. Third, using our findings, we propose a provincial model of human resources empowerment for managers within the organization.

### **1. To evaluate the effectiveness of the practical empowerment activities**

#### **First step: content analysis**

The first objective of our research was evaluating the effectiveness of the practical empowerment activities in the studied organization. To do this, we reviewed all available documents and conducted interviews with senior managers and executives.

All available documents including the annual evaluation forms of job performance related to human resources empowerment in the years of 2014 and 2015 within the organization were analyzed to evaluate the effectiveness of the practical actions. We selected this time framework because this was such a milestone for this organization since it has received official instructions to develop its human resources management programs. Table 4 briefly indicates these results:

**Table 4. The most important practical activities related to human resources empowerment within the organization**

<b>2014 year</b>	
1	Caring to suggested issues and polling implementation system.
2	Caring to employee's participation rate in suggestions analysis system.
3	Caring to expenditure reduction as a result of implemented suggestions.
4	Caring to working process precipitating and quality improvement.
5	Caring to internal performance evaluation system by using BSC and EFQM models.
6	Caring to implementation of IT training programs for the employees.
7	Caring to encouraging employees and punishing them in dealing with the customers.
8	Caring to codification and implementation of the approved training programs.
9	Caring to implementation of experts' occupational career boundaries
10	Caring to job fitness between the jobs and job holders.
<b>2015 year</b>	
1	Caring to codify worthiness declaration system.
2	Caring to determine the specialized committees and practical capabilities.
3	Caring to delivering methods for suggestions and widening the spectrums of rewarding.
4	Caring to necessary mechanisms of the establishment and implementation of PES.
5	Caring to designing software and implementing computer-based evaluation system.
6	Caring to monthly and yearly self-evaluation reports.
7	Caring to rules and regulations of employee's payment system based on competency.
8	Caring to receiving annual training plans from the head-centers and training employers.
9	Caring to management reduction or investigating occupational epithets by almost 20%.

The findings showed that a special attention was paid to some specific organizational features in 2014 (shown in table 4 such as implementing IT and other approved training programs); however, some other features such as establishing a quality management, exerting the approaches and techniques of TQM, ISO, 5S and implementation of approved proposals have been neglected. Furthermore, in 2015, effective activities have been done about key organizational features (shown in table 4 such as receiving annual training plans from the head-centers and training employers, and

monthly and yearly self-evaluation reports), while in some areas of human resources empowerment activities nothing has been done. Some of the neglected features were: lack of potential administrators database, poor participation of employees in forming these activities, lack or poor implementation of the suggested ideas, absence of computerized files of employees performance, poor employees satisfaction rate, poor content of IT training programs, inability in preparing 5% of well-behaved employees and 5% of poor-behaved ones for servicing positions.

**Second step: interviews**

In a parallel process, we interviewed senior managers about the effectiveness of the practical empowerment activities in the organization and asked them 1) to describe the practical activities associated with empowerment programs within the past two years, and 2) to rate the extent to which these practical actions have been useful in empowering the human resources of the organization. The interviews showed that staff training and motivation have been the only practical activities for empowering employees during the time period. They stated that the training being done and the efforts of motivating employees have not had any significant effect on employees' empowerment. In other words, training could not empower them. Our interviews revealed that this has mainly been due to the impracticality of the training or its being irrelevant to the occupational needs and that they may not be as beneficial as they should be. On the other hand, motivating the employees is limited to financial supports and rewards; while some other essential factors such as job significance, upgrading the employees by respect and gratitude, promoting them based on expertise and qualification, showing respect to them, and enhancing tranquility in them have been neglected. Examples of the interviews are presented below:

**Example 1:**

“The held training has not been effective because there was no fitness between the training and organizational tasks. Also, if I want to individually keep on the training courses it would not be possible. However, some courses like computer courses have been a little better. Unfortunately, this organization is trying to motivate

employees only by focusing on financial incentives not considering job enrichment, promoting on the basis of competencies and respecting their preferences.” (Male, 53 years, Planning Management department)

**Example 2:**

“The courses were rich and with a good content. But they were not based on workplace requirements. This means on the one hand, they are not consistent with workplace needs and our workplace really does not need them! So, we cannot apply them practically. On the other hand, there is no regular investigation within our organization to evaluate the effectiveness of these courses” (Male, 41 years, Re-engineering department)

**2. To study strategies and processes of human resources empowerment**

**First step: content analysis**

The second objective of our research was to study the strategies of human resources empowerment and related processes in the studied organization through considering information sharing, devolution, and autonomy or work independence in all the subdivisions and within the boundaries of the organization, replacing hierarchies with autonomous teams. To reach this, all the relevant documents within the organization were analyzed. Our content analysis showed that the organization's goals and missions only cover the codified human resources strategies within the strategic planning (shown in table 5). However, no practical plan has been designed in the area of human resources empowerment, no viable strategy has been devised, and no operational plan has been performed. However, out of the empowerment processes, devolution only has received enough attention.

**Table 5. The human resources strategies used by the host organization**

2014 & 2015	1	Moving toward where key positions are highly considered.
	2	Continuous scientific planning to increase job satisfaction rate of the personnel.
	3	Moving toward fortifying organization leadership style by ideal models.
	4	Promoting and improving teamwork and aligning organizational and individual goals.
	5	Optimal utilization of effective capitals in the organization.

**Second step: interviews**

In line with the second goal of this study, we conducted interviews with senior managers and executives to record their personal opinions about the existing empowerment strategies within the organization. Most of them believed that no organized strategy was assigned to empower their staff. Moreover, they stated that at the time there was no comprehensive empowerment program with a view toward future in the organization. This explicit acknowledge reveals that the process of human resources empowerment has been ignored in this organization. The sum of the components related to the process of human resources empowerment supports the notion that delegation has not been seriously taken into account in the organization. Below are examples of these interviews:

**Example 1:**

“The strategy and process of empowerment are not considered in our organization because I feel that there is no systematic program for empowering human resources. For example, the delegation process is mostly related to personal relation and the trust of superior in subordinate, and not competency! Also, self-efficacy concept, authority, being effective, job significance and trust have not been taken into account here. This is because there is not work authority in our organization and all the works have become specified. It will limit our authority. Empowerment process in job design should be organically considered whereas the current job design is only based on task!” (Male, 44 years, finances and support department).

**Example 2:**

“Senior managers are not interested in giving any delegation to subordinates. More precisely, they give a little freedom and delegation to subordinates but they do not care about the consequences of this little delegation. On the basis of this behavior, no senior managers feel any responsibility toward the delegated task to subordinates and if any mistake happens, these senior managers easily will say that the subordinate has made a mistake even if the mistake is from their side!” (Male, 38 years, department of basic studies and comprehensive plans).

**Example 3:**

“Empowerment means delegating to staff, not with the aim of empowering employees but with the aim of motivating them. Unfortunately, this is not systematic and is more personalized such as a taste! Apart from this, a sense of autonomy, self-efficiency, being effective, confidence and job significance are considered in moral and job justification courses instead of empowerment planning!” (Female, 46 years, education and planning department).

**Example 4:**

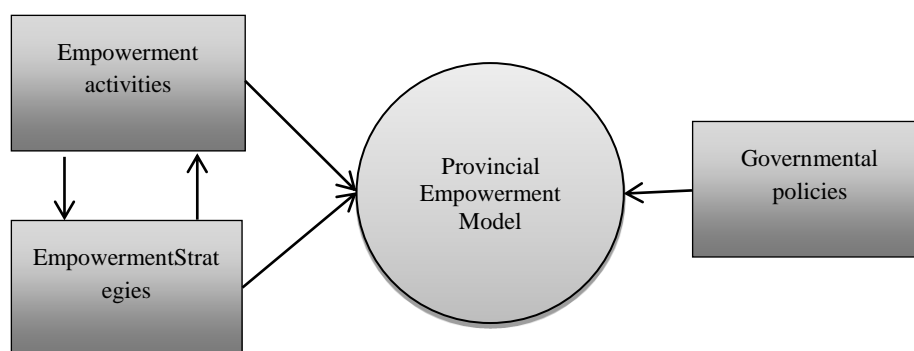
“A strategy codified in the field of human empowerment does not exist in this organization. Information sharing is at an average level, but there is no power for decision-making and action. Indeed, delegation is not taken seriously into account. There are powers in the range of job functions, but it may not delegate the authority of superior to another, except in special cases such as holidays! Lack of autonomous and independent teams is clear. In some cases, just committees might be formed in any department and they have just an advisory role, not executive!” (Male, 41 years, Re-engineering department).

**3. To propose a provincial model of human resources empowerment****First step: Analyzing empowerment activities and strategies**

After reviewing the practical empowerment activities as well as the empowerment strategies, this is the time to pay an exact attention to the third aim which is to propose a domestic model of human resources empowerment for the managers in the host organization. The accurate analysis of activities and strategies related to managers and executive’s empowerment showed that there was no organized plan to empower them. The only important empowerment activity was the *managers training* which also has not been successfully performed there. However, there have been several plans such as the gubernatorial organizations’ development decreed by the Iranian government which was assigned to the organizations throughout the country in 2010, but they were, to some extent, related to the empowerment of human resources and not managers.

Further investigation of the strategies and processes of empowerment such as information sharing, devolution, autonomy and

independence at work, and replacing hierarchies with autonomous teams showed that in these areas there is no comprehensive organized plan. We may, therefore, conclude that empowerment processes and strategies in the organization have not been well-designed. Moreover, the interviews showed that the codified strategies are not included in the current empowerment processes such as information sharing, devolution, autonomy and independence within the organization, and replacing hierarchies with autonomous teams. Figure 2 shows the most important factors which can affect the proposed empowerment model.



**Fig. 2. Factors affecting empowerment among managers and executives**

**Second Step: Analyzing requirements for raising a domestic model**

According to the government's cabinet resolution in 2010, the administrative transformation plan contains seven decrees which most empowerment models must consider: having a logical view on government's size, having the transformations in the organizational structures, having the transformations in the management systems, having the transformations in the employment systems, training and improving the human resources of the government, having the plan of reforming the processes and methods of administrative technological development and keeping the dignity of the people in the country's administrative system.

The mentioned decrees were to cause developments in governmental organizations. Some of the plans concerning enhancement and empowerment of human resources have been

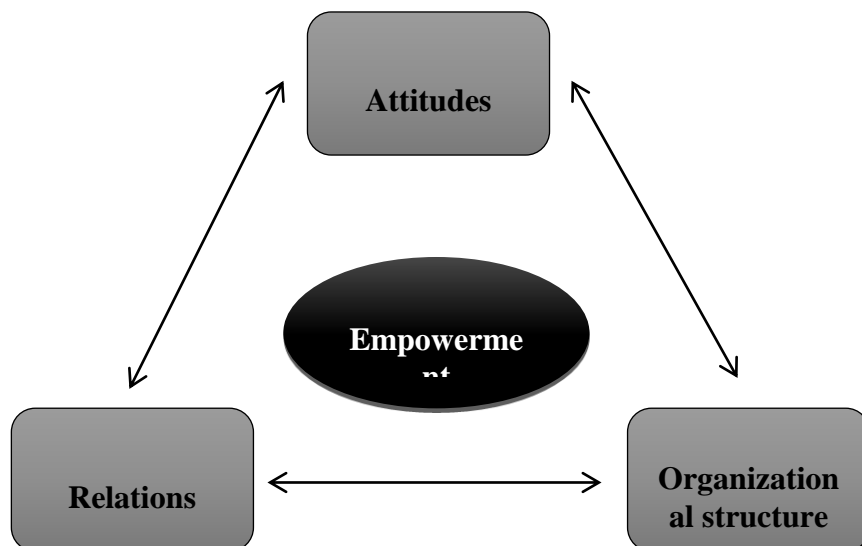
codified, decreed and assigned, but they have not been constantly and coherently taken into consideration. Therefore, different models of human resources empowerment were examined. According to our findings and along with considering the regional and cultural conditions of the organization, we attempted to design an appropriate empowerment model to develop and enhance human resources empowerment among managers and executives.

### **Proposing a new domestic empowerment model**

In the proposed model, the empowerment scheme is considered as a function of the occupations, and the occupations themselves are categorized into three groups. The first group is the essential-professional jobs which are directly related to the mission of an organization. These jobs are vital to the organization and those individuals who apply for them should be highly motivated, occupationally satisfied and empowered. The second group of occupations is the staff-specialized which involves jobs such as planning, financial and human resources. The final group is the services jobs; although they influence the overall outcomes of the organization, due to the conditions they could be provided for short term or long term contracts with the employees.

Considering the three occupational groups, it is required to have three groups of empowerment incentives and strategies for the human resources of the organization. In addition, what seems to be the most important in the empowerment model is to know what factors are fundamental in these models; in this regard the most important factors that should be considered in the organization are the three transformation dimensions shown in figure 3. First, change the attitude of employees to manage their work and to take responsibility for its results. Second, change the work relationships in which team relationships are vital and the emphasis is on both factors of process and content of the job. Third, change the structure of the organization (i.e., strategies, operations and incentives to fit with the empowerment of human resources).





**Fig. 3. Levels of change to the human resources empowerment**

The finalized model of empowerment is based on the key elements illustrated in Figure 3. This model contains three fundamental variables of causal, mediator, and output which are under the influence of three factors of actuating, inhibiting and motivating. On the one hand, this model includes the actuating variables and on the other hand, it covers the inhibiting variables. There are other variables that influence the empowerment of human resources that we consider them as the following: *causal variables* such as change of attitude, responsibility bearing, moving from concentration to distraction, and financial resources; *mediator variables* which refer to the organization's general conditions and in particular to the current situations such as the involvement of employees in organizational information, the determination of the scope of autonomy, the creation of autonomous teams and capable management; and *output variables* which contain creativity, providence, responsibility bearing, flexibility, reduction of the tensions and stress in the working environment, development of the organizational structures, creation of a dependability atmosphere in the organization, interest in cooperating in teamwork. All the variables are specifically displayed in Figure 4.

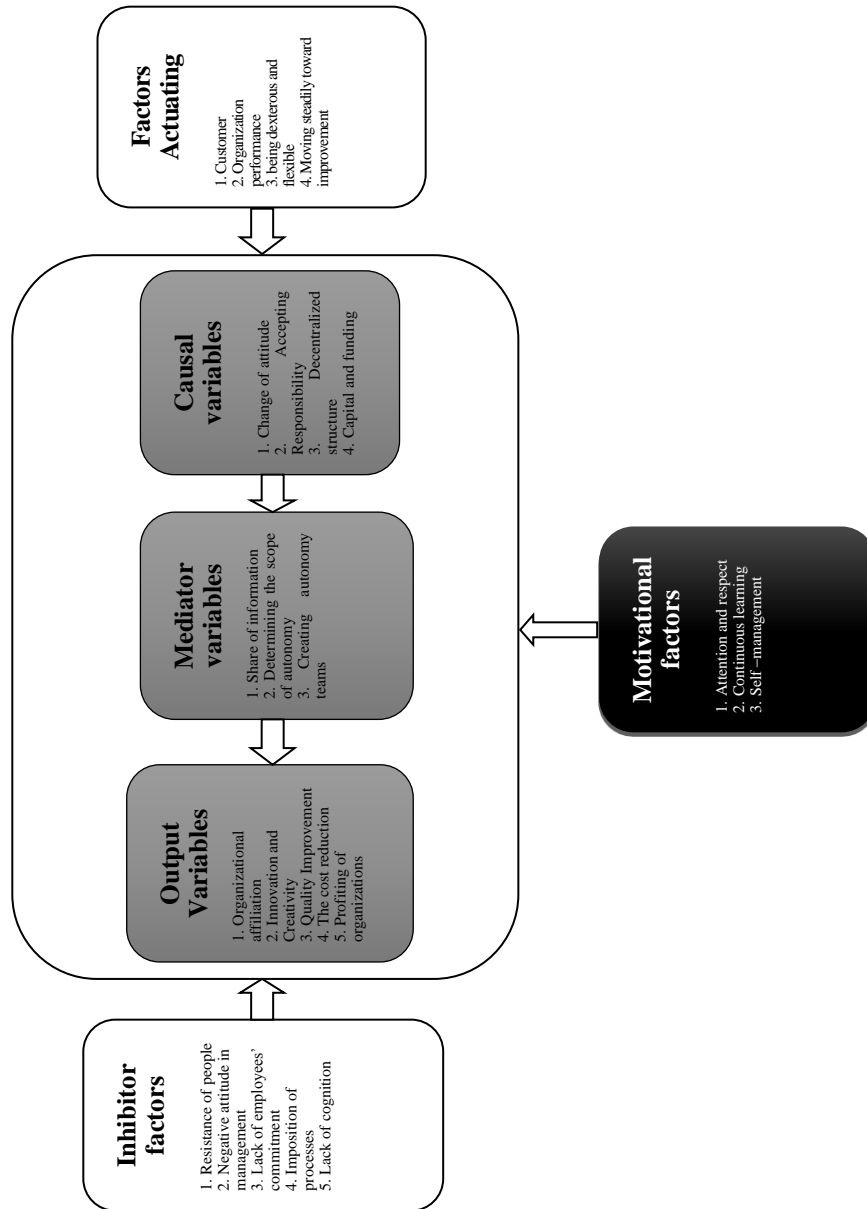


Fig. 4. The proposed model of empowerment for managers

## **Discussion and conclusion**

### **Activities**

Human resources empowerment is considered to be the essentiality of any organization. This is because the empowerment provides a competitive advantage for the organization and it would contribute to gain pre-eminence and excellence of the organization (Jose & Mampilly, 2014; Alvesson & Sveningsson, 2015; Kundu, Kumar & Gahlawat, 2019). Accordingly, in the study managers' empowerment level, empowerment plans and its presence/absence were investigated in the host organization based on two factors of empowerment activities and empowerment strategies in order to propose a provincial model of empowerment for managers and executives of this organization. The assessment of effective practical actions of human resources empowerment in 2014 and 2015 showed that although an official and bureaucratic attention has been paid to the positive empowerment activities in this organization, still there is a need to pay a particular scientific-based attention to the improper orders. Our focus on analyzing empowerment activities revealed two important factors that can significantly affect the manager empowerment. These factors were training courses and rewards.

Evaluation of the effectiveness of these activities showed that the training courses with the aim of motivating managers to enhance their empowerment did not lead to a better experience of empowerment history. As far as the professional trainings are not based on workplace demands and such foreground does not require these types of expertise, we would expect that they are not practically influential. The managers believed that even without these trainings they are able to fulfill their job responsibilities. Therefore, the content of these training courses must substantially reflect a good match with the current work-related demands to be accepted by the managers.

Further investigations indicated that the rewards are conferred to all of the managers, which would not develop a competitive climate and therefore would not lead to work motivation. Subsequently due to fact that the qualifications of the individuals would be neglected, it may negatively affect managers' empowerment. Thus, it would be highly recommended to apply a competitive pattern for distributing rewards

based on competency of managers and link rewards to empowerment activities. The other important point is the style of rewarding and encouraging in this organization which is purely financial-based. The so-called rewarding would lead to motivation if they are in line with the needs of managers. As the needs of different managers might be different, thus the impact of rewarding on empowerment may vary from one to another. The need could be money, respect, promotion, or financial support to take part in the international conferences. We may, therefore, suggest the organization to move to the side of a need-based reward rather than a financial-based reward.

In general, due to the extracted points, first it is suggested that the professional training should be practical and demand-based and second, they should be encouraging and motivating. This potential professional training is more likely to result in improvements in job satisfaction, job efficiency of managers and may raise the notion among managers and staff that the organizational budget has been correctly spent.

### **Strategies**

Investigating the strategies and processes of empowerment such as information sharing, devolution, autonomy and independence in work, and replacing autonomous teams with hierarchies showed that in this area there is no comprehensive codified plan. Therefore, the suitable processes and strategies in the organization have not been designed. Moreover, the interviews approved that the codifying strategies and the empowerment processes such as information sharing, devolution, autonomy and independence within the target organization, and replacing autonomous teams with hierarchies have been all neglected.

Furthermore, the detailed investigations showed that only devolution has received attention among the empowerment processes which by itself has happened based on personal preferences. However, to some extent, information sharing has been done, but those informed employees are not in the position to make decisions. Regarding this, Blanchard, Carlos and Randolph (2000) assert that information sharing will allow employees to identify their position in their organization. Information sharing has begun to enhance trustworthiness in the organization and break apart the traditional

hierarchical boundaries which, as a result, would lead to the enhancement of fulfilling the responsibilities. In addition, this study evidenced that there is no occupational autonomy and independence in the organization in the form of autonomous teams. However, there were specialized committees that had purely advisory roles, while in the autonomous teams a group of employees has specific responsibilities and carries out the occupational processes from the beginning to the end. They manage everything and design the responsibilities equally and fairly (Tune & Millett, 2017). The advantages of having autonomous teams would be providing job satisfaction, changing attitude, having commitment, having better communication between employees and managers, making decisions more efficient, improving operations, and reducing the costs of the organization (Tune & Millett, 2017; Stray, Moe, & Hoda, 2018).

Setting new empowerment strategy should be welcomed by at least top organizational managers. Otherwise, even subordinates may never try to support and follow these strategies. In doing so, the belief of senior managers in the necessity of codification of empowerment plans and their commitment to the earnestness is a central topic. The senior managers of the organization could show their commitment to the empowerment plan and finally to the organization in three ways: First, to create a positive organizational climate to empower the human resources; second, to support a systematic process of human resources empowerment based on the national model; and third, to respect the human values and to align organizational goals with individual goals (Iranian Empowerment Foundation of human Resources, 2008).

Some topics such as setting clear goals and involving employees in the codification process, having clear expectations, trusting employees, paying attention to the interests of individuals, appreciating the employees, sharing information publicly, having close communication, and accepting the errors would help the senior managers to establish these empowerment strategies (AL-Rousan, 2014; Tune & Millett, 2017). Thus, our studied organization needs to focus on practical empowerment strategies and, at the same time, develops these strategies at different organizational levels.

**Proposed model**

The proposed model is completely based on the data gained from the content analysis and semi-structured interviews with top managers and organizational executives. From one side, this model focuses on the importance and contributions of empowerment activities and strategies and, from the other side, it precisely pays attention to the organizational culture, climate and managers' beliefs. The most important benefit of this provincial model is its multidimensional attention to the activities and strategies of empowerment from a governmental point of view and managerial point of view, simultaneously. The second benefit is that this model strives to personalize the activities and strategies identified in previous research for a specific organization in order to approach the theoretical and practical lines in empowerment domain. The final benefit of this model is to give an example of the importance of local and regional factors that can influence organizational managers' empowerment. This is in line with the finding of Koberg, Boss, Senjem & Goodman (1999) that both the managers and the employees would be benefiting from the empowerment advantages. According to their findings, empowerment would provide self-sufficiency, freedom and skills improvement for employees to have the opportunity for development and efficiency and, on the other hand, by providing highly motivated and skilled employees, the managers would be able to react properly to the dynamic competitive environment.

**Suggestions for future studies**

This study is based on a qualitative approach in gathering and analyzing the data. We suggest future researchers to replicate our results with more complex research approaches that include more quantitative methods. In addition, we recommend future studies to collect data from the subordinates of the managers to assess the efficiency of these programs from both managers and their employees simultaneously.

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